

*These notes refer to the Defamation Act (Northern Ireland)
2022 (c.30) which received Royal Assent on 6 June 2022*

Defamation Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

3. The aim of the Act is to reform the law of defamation to ensure that a fair balance is struck between the right to freedom of expression and the protection of reputation. The Act makes a number of substantive changes to the law of defamation, but is not designed to codify the law into a single statute.
4. Policy Objectives
 - Make it easier and less expensive to take legal action when you have been defamed;
 - Make it harder for the rich and influential to chill free speech;
 - Protect the rights of scientists and academics to engage in robust debate;
 - Protect the right of journalists to conduct responsible and necessary investigations;
 - Protect the work of Non-Governmental Organisations;
 - Remove the current presumption in favour of a jury trial;
 - Introduce a defence of “responsible publication on matters of public interest”;
 - Introduce new statutory defences of truth and honest opinion to replace the common law defences of justification and fair comment.